The SAGA of The SWAMP THING

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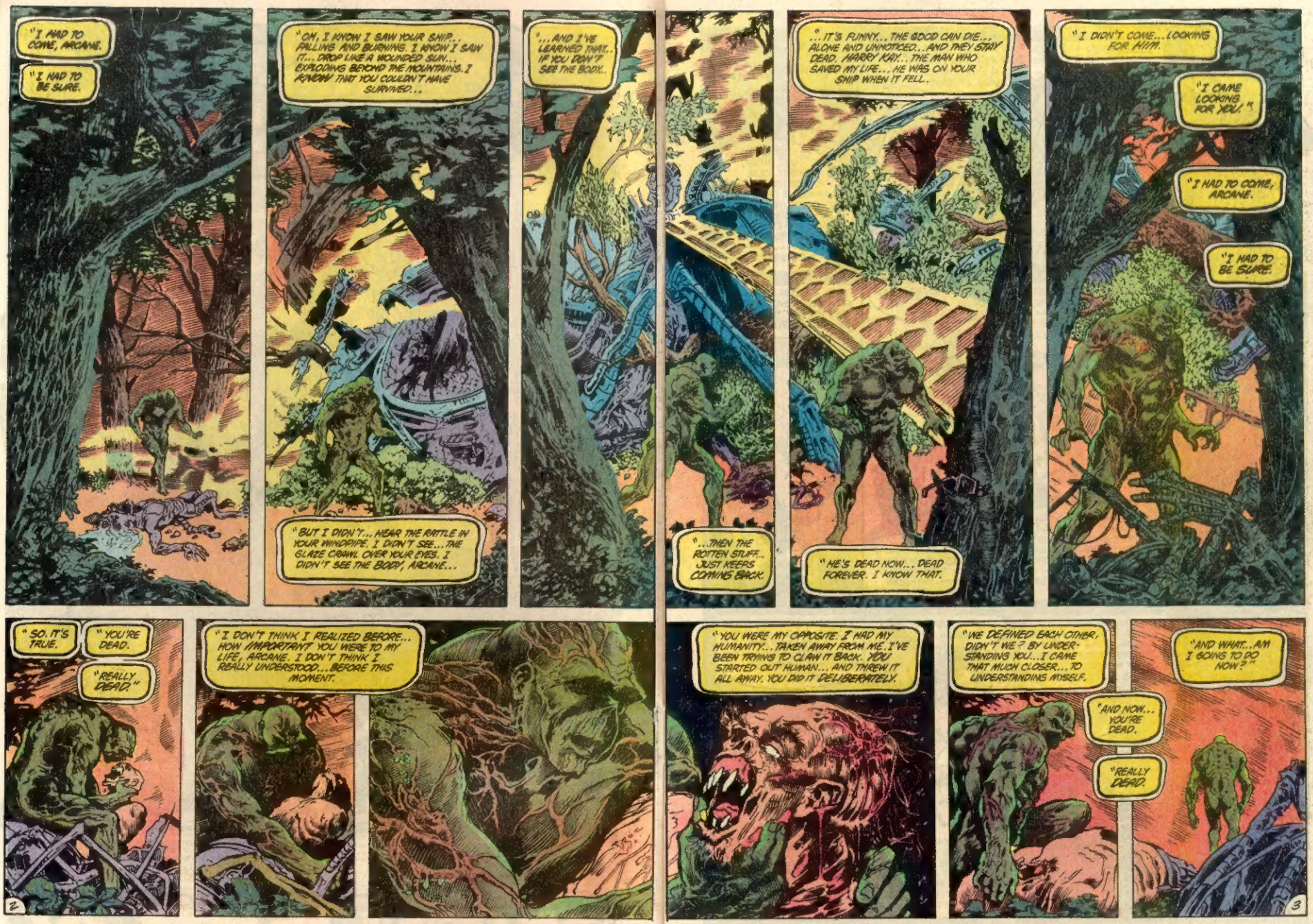
"I HAD TO COME, ARCANE.
"I HAD TO BE SURE.
"OH, I KNOW I SAW YOUR SHIP... FALLING AND BURNING. I KNOW I SAW IT... DROP LIKE A WOUNDED SUN... EXPLODING BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS. I KNOW THAT YOU COULDN'T HAVE SURVIVED...
"BUT I DIDN'T... HEAR THE RATTLE IN YOUR WINDPIPE. I DIDN'T SEE... THE GLAZE CRAWL OVER YOUR EYES. I DIDN'T SEE THE BODY, ARCANE...
"...AND I'VE LEARNED THAT... IF YOU DON'T SEE THE BODY..
"...THEN THE ROTTEN STUFF.. JUST KEEPS COMING BACK.
"...IT'S FUNNY... THE GOOD CAN DIE... ALONE AND UNNOTICED... AND THEY STAY DEAD. HARRY KAY... THE MAN WHO SAVED MY LIFE... HE WAS ON YOUR SHIP WHEN IT FELL..
"HE'S DEAD NOW... DEAD FOREVER. I KNOW THAT.
"I DIDN'T COME... LOOKING FOR AIM.
"I CAME LOOKING FOR YOU."
"I HAD TO COME, ARCANE.
"I HAD TO BE SURE.
"SO. IT'S TRUE.
"YOU'RE DEAD.
"REALLY DEAD."
"I DON'T THINK I REALIZED BEFORE... HOW IMPORTANT YOU WERE TO MY LIFE, ARCANE. I DON'T THINK I REALLY UNDERSTOOD... BEFORE THIS MOMENT.
"YOU WERE MY OPPOSITE. I HAD MY HUMANITY... TAKEN AWAY FROM ME. I'VE BEEN TRYING TO CLAW IT BACK. YOU STARTED OUT HUMAN... AND THREW IT ALL AWAY. YOU DID IT DELIBERATELY.
"WE DEFINED EACH OTHER, DIDN'T WE? BY UNDERSTANDING YOU... I CAME THAT MUCH CLOSER... TO UNDERSTANDING MYSELF.
"AND NOW... YOU'RE DEAD.
"REALLY DEAD.
"AND WHAT... AM I GOING TO DO NOW?"
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ELSEWHERE:
WELL, GENERAL? YOU KNOW WHERE THEY ARE.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?
DO? ISN'T IT OBVIOUS? I'M GOING TO KILL THEM, DWIGHT. I'M GOING TO KILL ALL OF THEM.
THEY'RE ALL THERE, DWIGHT. OUR AGENTS HAVE CONFIRMED IT. THE CABLES, BARCLAY, THE TREMAYNE WOMAN... AND THE THING THAT WAS ONCE ALEC HOLLAND.
THE SWAMP THING.
ACCORDING TO OUR PEOPLE IN VIRGINIA, THE HOLLAND-CREATURE HAS JUST CONCLUDED AN EXTREMELY NOISY BATTLE WITH AN OLD ADVERSARY OF HIS.
THIS ADVERSARY--A MAN NAMED ARCANE--HAD A STRANGE KIND OF AIRSHIP. HE RAN IT INTO A MOUNTAIN RANGE. BOOM. END OF BATTLE.
I HAVE THE SATELLITE PHOTOGRAPHS. TAKE A LOOK.
MMM. SO YOU'RE GOING FOR THE U.F.O. APPROACH?
WELL, IT'S WORKED BEFORE. THE LOCALS ALMOST CERTAINLY HEARD THE SHIP CRASH.
WE POSE AS GOVERNMENT PEOPLE, TELL THEM IT WAS A U.F.O., TOTAL SECURITY CLAMPDOWN, THAT SORT OF STUFF...
YEAH. I GUESS EVERYBODY SAW 'CLOSE ENCOUNTERS.' THEY EXPECT THAT KIND OF GOVERNMENT ACTION.
EXACTLY. 'NATIONAL SECURITY' IS ONE OF THOSE MAGICAL LITTLE PHRASES IT STOPS PEOPLE WORRYING ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE DOING, WHERE YOU'RE GOING...
... WHO YOU'RE KILLING.
EVERYBODY WHO KNOWS THE TRUTH ABOUT SUNDERLAND AND THE D.D.I. IS CONVENIENTLY GATHERED IN ONE SMALL AREA. WE GO IN. THEY GET KILLED. EASY AS THAT.
SUNDERLAND IS LIKE A DEATH MACHINE, DWIGHT. IT'S SLEEK AND CO-ORDINATED AND EFFICIENT. ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS POINT IT IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION...
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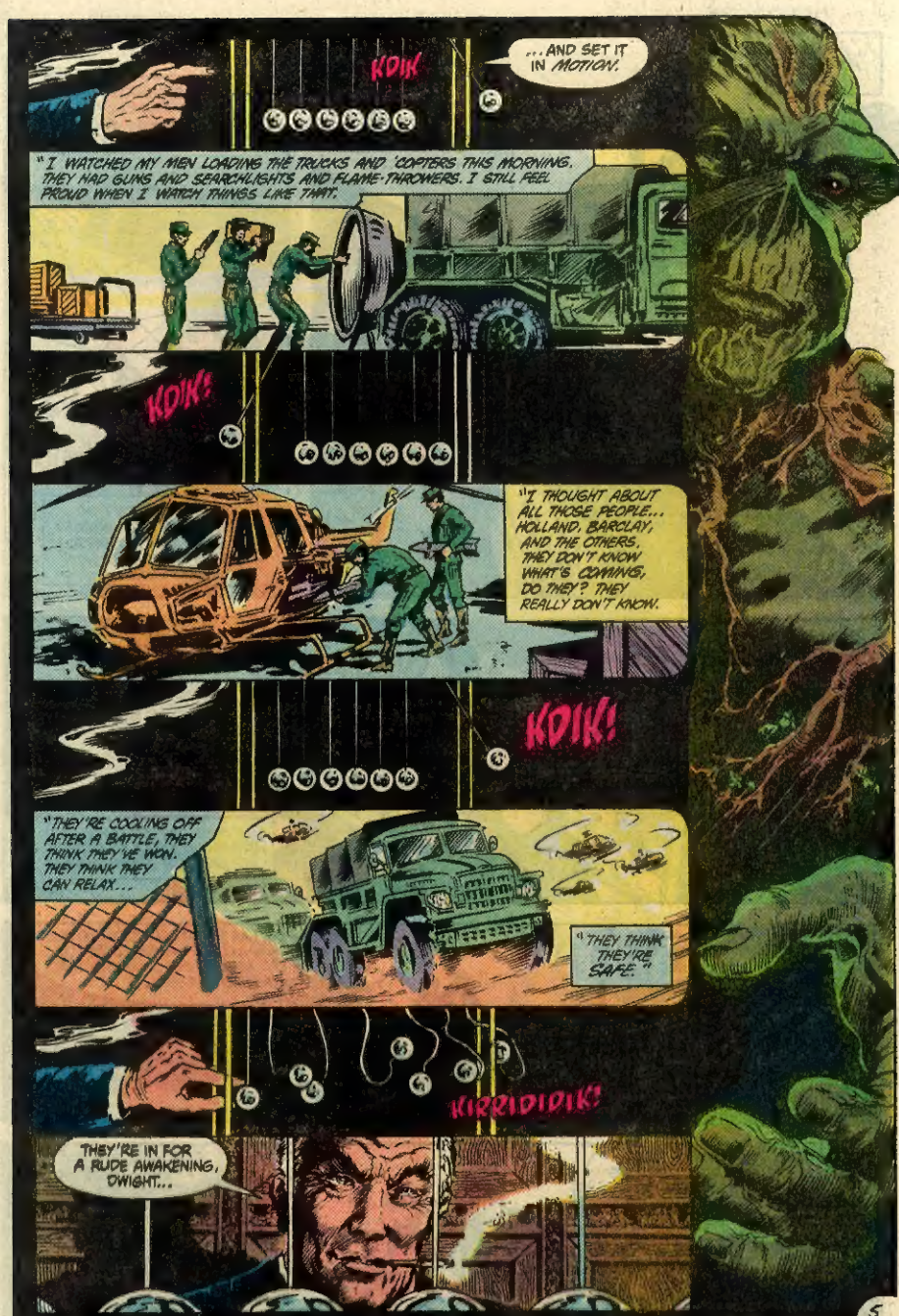
[CONTINUED ON SEE PAGE FOLLOWING]


KDIK
...AND SET IT IN MOTION.
"I WATCHED MY MEN LOADING THE TRUCKS AND 'COPTERS THIS MORNING. THEY HAD GUNS AND SEARCHLIGHTS AND FLAME-THROWERS. I STILL FEEL PROUD WHEN I WATCH THINGS LIKE THAT.
KDIK!
"I THOUGHT ABOUT ALL THOSE PEOPLE... HOLLAND, BARCLAY, AND THE OTHERS. THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT'S COMMING, DO THEY? THEY REALLY DON'T KNOW.
KDIK!
"THEY'RE COOLING OFF AFTER A BATTLE, THEY THINK THEY'VE WON. THEY THINK THEY CAN RELAX...
"THEY THINK THEY'RE SAFE."
KIRRIDIDIK!
THEY'RE IN FOR A RUDE AWAKENING, DWIGHT...

"...A VERY RUDE AWAKENING, INDEED."
HER NAME IS LIZABETH TREMAYNE, AND SHE'S USED TO TAKING HER SUNLIGHT A LITTLE MORE DILUTED.
STRUGGLING AWAKE, UNSTICKING HERSELF FROM THE HOT VINYL OF THE SEAT-COVERING, SHE STARTS TO REMEMBER...
SHE REMEMBERS THE VAN BREAKING DOWN. IT HAD BEEN LATE, IT HAD BEEN TOO FAR TO WALK, THERE HAD BEEN JUST HER...
...AND DENNIS.
SHE HOPES DENNIS IS GOING TO BE OKAY ABOUT THIS.
SHE HOPES DENNIS IS GOING TO MAINTAIN A SENSE OF PROPORTION. BECAUSE OTHERWISE...
...OTHERWISE IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG WALK HOME.
...AND, LIKE, MY MOM HAS THIS PLACE DOWN IF FLORIDA. YOU'LL *LIKE* IT THERE, LIZ. WE CAN GET SOME SUN, MAYBE DRIVE OUT SOME OF THE *SHADOWS* THAT HAVE GOTTEN INTO OUR LIVES.
WE CAN BE NORMAL PEOPLE AGAIN. I MEAN, SURE, I'M NOT FORGETTING ABOUT *ALEC*, BUT...WELL, HELL, LIZ. WE'VE GOT *EACH OTHER* NOW. WE NEED SOME TIME ON OUR OWN.
DENNIS...
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DENNIS, LOOK, THIS IS ALL MY FAULT. I SHOULDN'T HAVE... WELL, LOOK, IT'S JUST...
...IT'S JUST YOU KEEP SAYING "ME", DENNIS. YOU KEEP SAYING "US"...
...AND I DON'T SEE IT LIKE THAT.
I MEAN, LAST NIGHT, IT WAS... WELL, IT WAS LIKE TIME OUT, Y'KNOW? IT WAS... WELL, JUST SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED. IT HAPPENED ONCE AND THAT'S IT.
...BUT YOU CAN'T BUILD A FUTURE AROUND THAT.
ALL WE HAVE IN COMMON IS THE HORROR IN OUR LIVES, DENNIS. THAT'S ALL. THAT'S WHAT HOLDS US TOGETHER.
IF WE WERE LIVING OUT IN... OH, I DON'T KNOW, MIAMI COUNTY OR SOMEWHERE, WE'D BE RIPPING EACH OTHER'S THROATS OUT WITHIN A MONTH.
I MEAN, YOU UNDERSTAND THAT?
...DON'T YOU?
DENNIS?
DENNIS, WHERE ARE YOU...?
HEY! LOOK, PLEASE... LET ME EXPLAIN!
DENNIS, YOU DIDN'T LET ME EXPLAIN!
IN SILENCE, HE WALKS AWAY. IN SILENCE, SHE STARES AFTER HIM. A BIRD SINGS BRIEFLY AND THEN STOPS, EMBARRASSED. FAR ABOVE, A HELICOPTER DRONES THROUGH THE STILL MORNING...
...AND THEN ANOTHER.
AND THEN ANOTHER.

ELSEWHERE:
I MADE MY WAY BACK HERE... TO THE MOON. NO SIGN... OF DENNIS OR LIZ YET. IT DOESN'T MATTER.
I DON'T HAVE... ANYWHERE ELSE TO GO.
ARCANE... ARCANE...
MAYBE YOU WERE RIGHT.
MAYBE YOU WERE RIGHT... JUST TO DIE LIKE THAT.
IT'S A... NEW WORLD, ARCANE. IT'S FULL OF... SHOPPING MALLS AND STRIPLIGHTS AND SOFTWARE. THE DARK CORNERS ARE BEING PUSHED BACK... A LITTLE MORE EVERY DAY.
WE'RE THINGS OF THE SHADOW, YOU AND I... AND THERE ISN'T AS MUCH SHADOW... AS THERE USED TO BE.
PERHAPS THERE WAS ONCE A WORLD... WE COULD HAVE BELONGED TO... MAYBE SOMEWHERE IN EUROPE... BACK IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY. THE WORLD WAS... FULL OF SHADOWS THEN... FULL OF MONSTERS...
NOT ANY MORE.
THINGS LIKE US... CAN'T SURVIVE IN THE LIGHT, ARCANE. PERHAPS YOU REALIZED THAT... RIGHT AT THE END.
MAYBE YOU WERE RIGHT... MAYBE WE'RE BETTER DEAD.
MAYBE THE WORLD HAS RUN OUT OF ROOM... FOR MONSTERS..."

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

"...OR MAYBE...THEY'RE JUST GETTING HARDER TO RECOGNIZE."
MIGHTY MOO
...GET THIS STRAIGHT. A MONSTER, IS THAT WHAT Y'R SAYING? FROM A YOU-FOE?
S'RIGHT. BIG GREEN FELLA COVERED IN THIS AWFUL SLIME AN' JUNK AN' STUFF. WE FOUND ITS SHIP UP BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS.
BUT DON'T YOU WORRY, POP. WE GOT THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL. THAT THING AIN'T GONNA GET VERY FAR.
AFTER ALL, THIS A MATTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY!
OH.
OH YEAH. SURE.
SAY, YOU NEED A HAND WITH THOSE SEARCHLIGHTS, SON?
ELSEWHERE:
MATT?
HOW ABOUT A LITTLE LIGHT IN HERE, HUH?
ABBY?
ABBY... WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE DID YOU GO? I...
IT'S OKAY, MATT...
IT'S OKAY.
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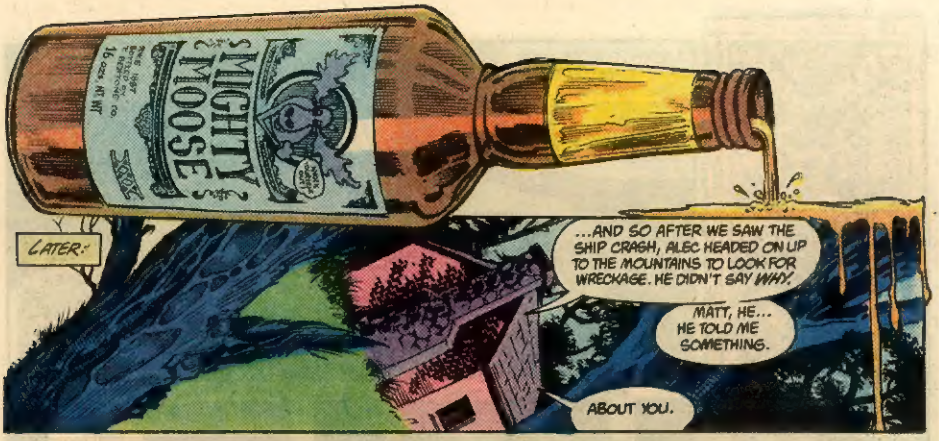

MIGHTY MOOSE
LATER:
...AND SO AFTER WE SAW THE SHIP CRASH, ALEC HEADED ON UP TO THE MOUNTAINS TO LOOK FOR WRECKAGE. HE DIDN'T SAY WHY.
MATT, HE... HE TOLD ME SOMETHING.
ABOUT YOU.

HE SAID HE THOUGHT YOU... THAT ALL THOSE MONSTERS AND HORRORS AND THINGS...
HE SAID HE THOUGHT THAT YOU WERE CAUSING THEM.

HE... HE WAS RIGHT, ABBY.
EVEN I DIDN'T KNOW IT UNTIL A WHILE AGO, BUT YEAH. ALEC WAS RIGHT.
BUT IT'S OVER NOW. I'VE BEATEN IT.

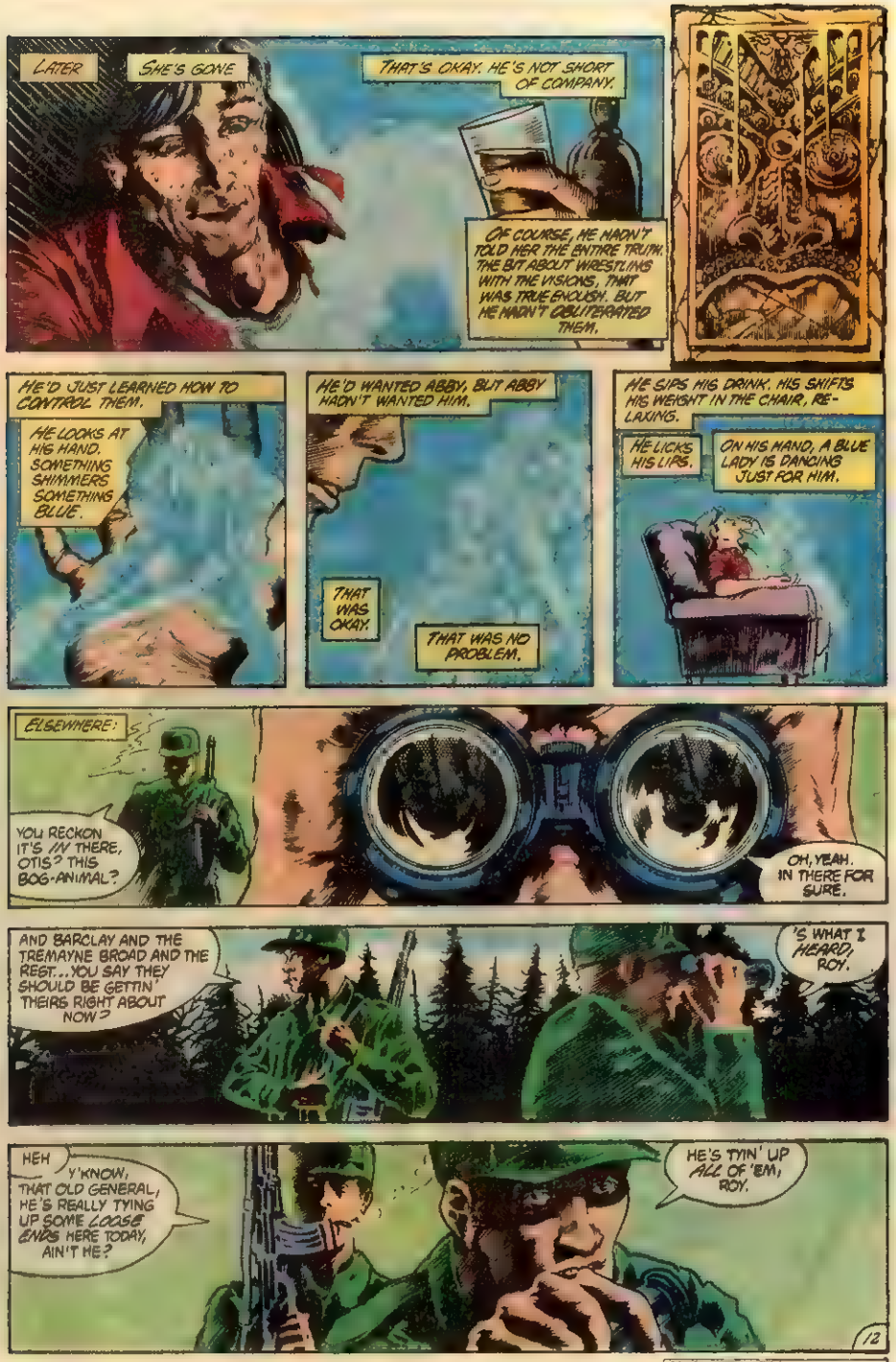
WHILE YOU WERE OUT, I...I'D BEEN DRINKING, ABBY. I'D BEEN DRINKING AND I HAD ONE OF MY... MY ATTACKS. IT WAS THE WORST YET.
ONLY THIS TIME I FOUGHT IT.
I FOUGHT IT, ABBY.

"THERE WERE THINGS WITH NO EYES AND THINGS LIKE DAMP, FURRY RUGS THAT GIGGLED WITH CHILDREN'S VOICES. THERE WERE THINGS I CAN'T TELL YOU ABOUT...
"...BUT I FOUGHT THEM.

"AND I WON. THEY JUST VANISHED! I FELT A GREAT, I DUNNO, A GREAT CALMNESS INSIDE ME. I KNEW THAT I'D BEATEN IT, THAT I'D RID MYSELF OF THIS... THIS ABILITY.
"THIS NIGHTMARE."

I DON'T KNOW WHERE IT CAME FROM, THE POWER... MAYBE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THAT ELECTROSHOCK THERAPY I GOT PUT THROUGH. IT DOESN'T MATTER.
IT'S GONE. THE CRAZINESS IS OVER. I'M OKAY.
WE'RE OKAY, ABBY.

LOOK...I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I LOVE YOU, ABBY. I WANT TO TELL YOU JUST HOW MUCH, BUT I DON'T HAVE THE WORDS FOR IT.
I DON'T HAVE THE LANGUAGE.
WE USED TO BE ABLE TO TELL EACH OTHER THINGS LIKE THAT WITHOUT WORDS. I KNOW THE DRINK MESSED UP A LOT OF THAT, BUT...WELL, I'M THROUGH THAT NOW.
HEY, ABBY...
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.
MATT...
MATT, I'M SORRY. I...
I'VE HAD TO LOCK A LOT OF THAT STUFF AWAY INSIDE MYSELF. I CAN'T JUST SWITCH IT BACK ON JUST LIKE THAT.
IT'S OKAY.
IT'S OKAY, ABBY. I UNDERSTAND. I CAN WAIT.
THANKS. I MEAN, REALLY. THANKS A LOT.
HEY, LOOK... I NEED TO TAKE THE AIR, OKAY? I NEED A WALK.
SURE, ABBY.
WHATEVER.


LATER
SHE'S GONE
THAT'S OKAY. HE'S NOT SHORT OF COMPANY.
OF COURSE, HE HADN'T TOLD HER THE ENTIRE TRUTH. THE BIT ABOUT WRESTLING WITH THE VISIONS, THAT WAS TRUE ENOUGH. BUT HE HADN'T OBLITERATED THEM.
HE'D JUST LEARNED HOW TO CONTROL THEM.
HE LOOKS AT HIS HAND. SOMETHING SHIMMERS SOMETHING BLUE.
HE'D WANTED ABBY, BUT ABBY HADN'T WANTED HIM.
THAT WAS OKAY.
THAT WAS NO PROBLEM.
HE SIPS HIS DRINK. HIS SHIFTS HIS WEIGHT IN THE CHAIR, RELAXING.
HE LICKS HIS LIPS.
ON HIS HAND, A BLUE LADY IS DANCING JUST FOR HIM.
ELSEWHERE:
YOU RECKON IT'S IN THERE, OTIS? THIS BOG-ANIMAL?
OH, YEAH. IN THERE FOR SURE.
AND BARCLAY AND THE TREMAYNE BROAD AND THE REST... YOU SAY THEY SHOULD BE GETTIN' THEIRS RIGHT ABOUT NOW?
'S WHAT I HEARD, ROY.
HEH
Y'KNOW, THAT OLD GENERAL, HE'S REALLY TYING UP SOME LOOSE ENDS HERE TODAY, AIN'T HE?
HE'S TYIN' UP ALL OF 'EM, ROY.
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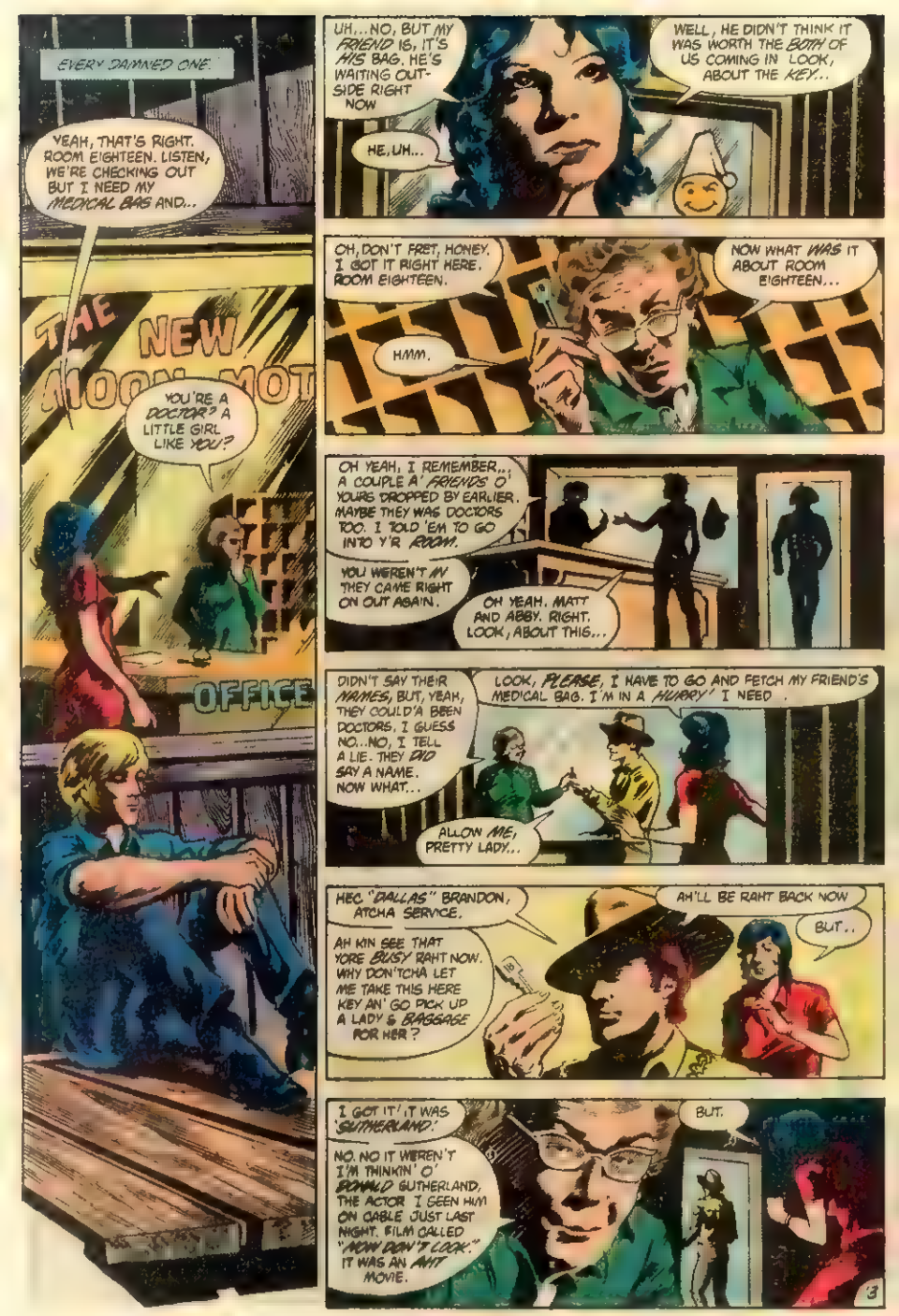
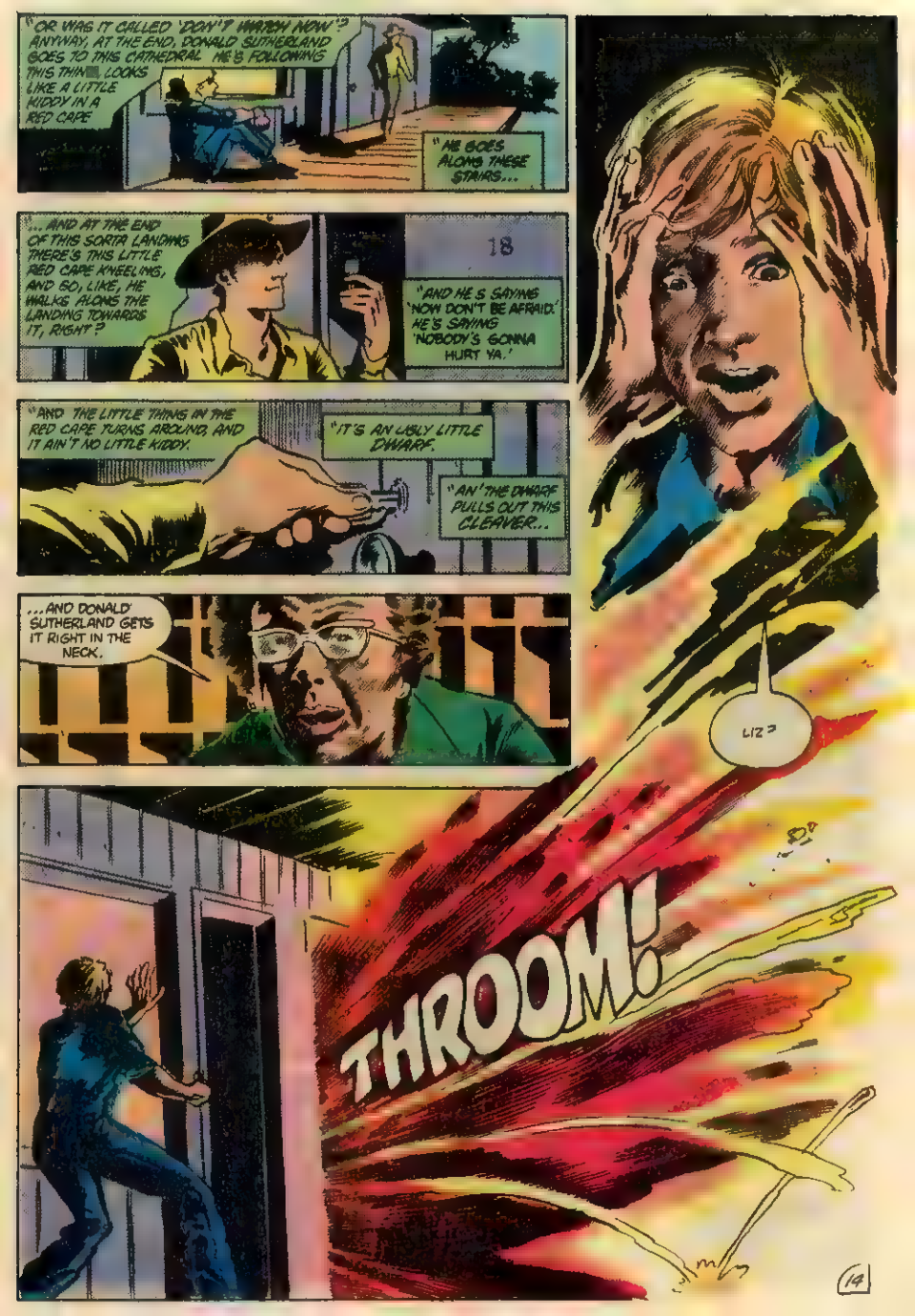

EVERY DAMNED ONE.
YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT. ROOM EIGHTEEN. LISTEN, WE'RE CHECKING OUT BUT I NEED MY MEDICAL BAG AND...
THE NEW MOON MOT
YOU'RE A DOCTOR? A LITTLE GIRL LIKE YOU?
OFFICE
UH...NO, BUT MY FRIEND IS, IT'S HIS BAG. HE'S WAITING OUTSIDE RIGHT NOW
HE, UH...
WELL, HE DIDN'T THINK IT WAS WORTH THE BOTH OF US COMING IN LOOK, ABOUT THE KEY...
OH, DON'T FRET, HONEY. I GOT IT RIGHT HERE. ROOM EIGHTEEN.
HMM.
NOW WHAT WAS IT ABOUT ROOM EIGHTEEN...
OH YEAH, I REMEMBER... A COUPLE A' FRIENDS O' YOURS DROPPED BY EARLIER. MAYBE THEY WAS DOCTORS TOO. I TOLD 'EM TO GO IN TO Y'R ROOM.
YOU WEREN'T IN THEY CAME RIGHT ON OUT AGAIN.
OH YEAH. MATT AND ABBY. RIGHT. LOOK, ABOUT THIS...
DIDN'T SAY THEIR NAMES, BUT, YEAH, THEY COULD'A BEEN DOCTORS, I GUESS NO...NO, I TELL A LIE. THEY DID SAY A NAME. NOW WHAT...
LOOK, PLEASE, I HAVE TO GO AND FETCH MY FRIEND'S MEDICAL BAG. I'M IN A HURRY! I NEED .
ALLOW ME, PRETTY LADY...
HEC "DALLAS" BRANDON, ATCHA SERVICE.
AH KIN SEE THAT YORE BUSY RAHT NOW. WHY DON'TCHA LET ME TAKE THIS HERE KEY AN' GO PICK UP A LADY & BAGGAGE FOR HER?
AH'LL BE RAHT BACK NOW
BUT..
I GOT IT! IT WAS 'GUTHERLAND.'
NO. NO IT WEREN'T I'M THINKIN' O' RONALD GUTHERLAND, THE ACTOR I SEEN HIM ON CABLE JUST LAST NIGHT. FILM CALLED "HOW DON'T LOOK." IT WAS AN AWT MOVIE.
BUT.
3


"OR WAS IT CALLED 'DON'T WARSH NOW'? ANYWAY, AT THE END, DONALD SUTHERLAND GOES TO THIS CATHEDRAL. HE'S FOLLOWING THIS THING, LOOKS LIKE A LITTLE KIDDY IN A RED CAPE
"HE GOES ALONG THESE STAIRS...
... AND AT THE END OF THIS SORTA LANDING THERE'S THIS LITTLE RED CAPE KNEELING, AND SO, LIKE, HE WALKS ALONG THE LANDING TOWARDS IT, RIGHT?
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"AND HE'S SAYING 'NOW DON'T BE AFRAID.' HE'S SAYING 'NOBODY'S GONNA HURT YA.'
"AND THE LITTLE THING IN THE RED CAPE TURNS AROUND, AND IT AIN'T NO LITTLE KIDDY.
"IT'S AN UGLY LITTLE DWARF.
"AN' THE DWARF PULLS OUT THIS CLEAVER...
...AND DONALD SUTHERLAND GETS IT RIGHT IN THE NECK.
LIZ?
THROOM!
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HE FINDS HER IN THE RECEPTION AREA. SHE'S TALKING ABOUT DWARVES. SHE'S TALKING ABOUT COWBOYS. HE'S HEARD THAT KIND OF TALK BEFORE, IN DAHANNE, IN PNHOM PENH...
AND ALL OF A SUDDEN HE ISN'T THINKING VIRGINIA ANY MORE. HE'S THINKING JUNGLE. HE'S THINKING NIGHT PATROL. HE'S THINKING INCOMING MAIL...
THE IDEA THAT THERE MIGHT BE A BACK-UP IN THE AREA OCCURS TO HIM ABOUT FIVE SECONDS BEFORE THE MEN IN SHINY SHOES COME PAST THE LOBBY WINDOWS.
"ALL WE HAVE IN COMMON IS THE HORROR IN OUR LIVES, DENNIS." THAT'S WHAT SHE'D SAID.
...BUT MAYBE HORROR WAS ALL IT TOOK. MAYBE THEY DIDN'T NEED ANYTHING ELSE TO MAKE IT WORK. MAYBE THINGS WOULD BE OKAY BETWEEN THEM...
...JUST SO LONG AS THEY NEVER RAN OUT OF HORRORS. SHE LEANS AGAINST HIM, SCARED, VULNERABLE, THE WAY A WOMAN SHOULD BE. AND DENNIS BARCLAY RUNS...
...AND DENNIS BARCLAY SMILES.
JEEZ, HENRY... WHAT KINDA CHARGE DID YA PUT IN THAT THING?
WELL, UH, Y'KNOW, JUST A LITTLE OVER THE USUAL. I, UH, WANTED TO MAKE SURE...
OH YEAH! YOU MADE SURE, ALL RIGHT. AW JEEZ, WILLYA LOOKIT THIS...
HENRY, HOW MANY BODIES DO WE HAVE HERE, EXACTLY? ONE OR TWO?
UH, WELL, TWO, I GUESS. WE DIDN'T SEE ANYBODY LEAVE. COULDN'T WE JUST COUNT HEADS OR SOMETHING?
GREAT IDEA, HENRY. YOU FIND 'EM..
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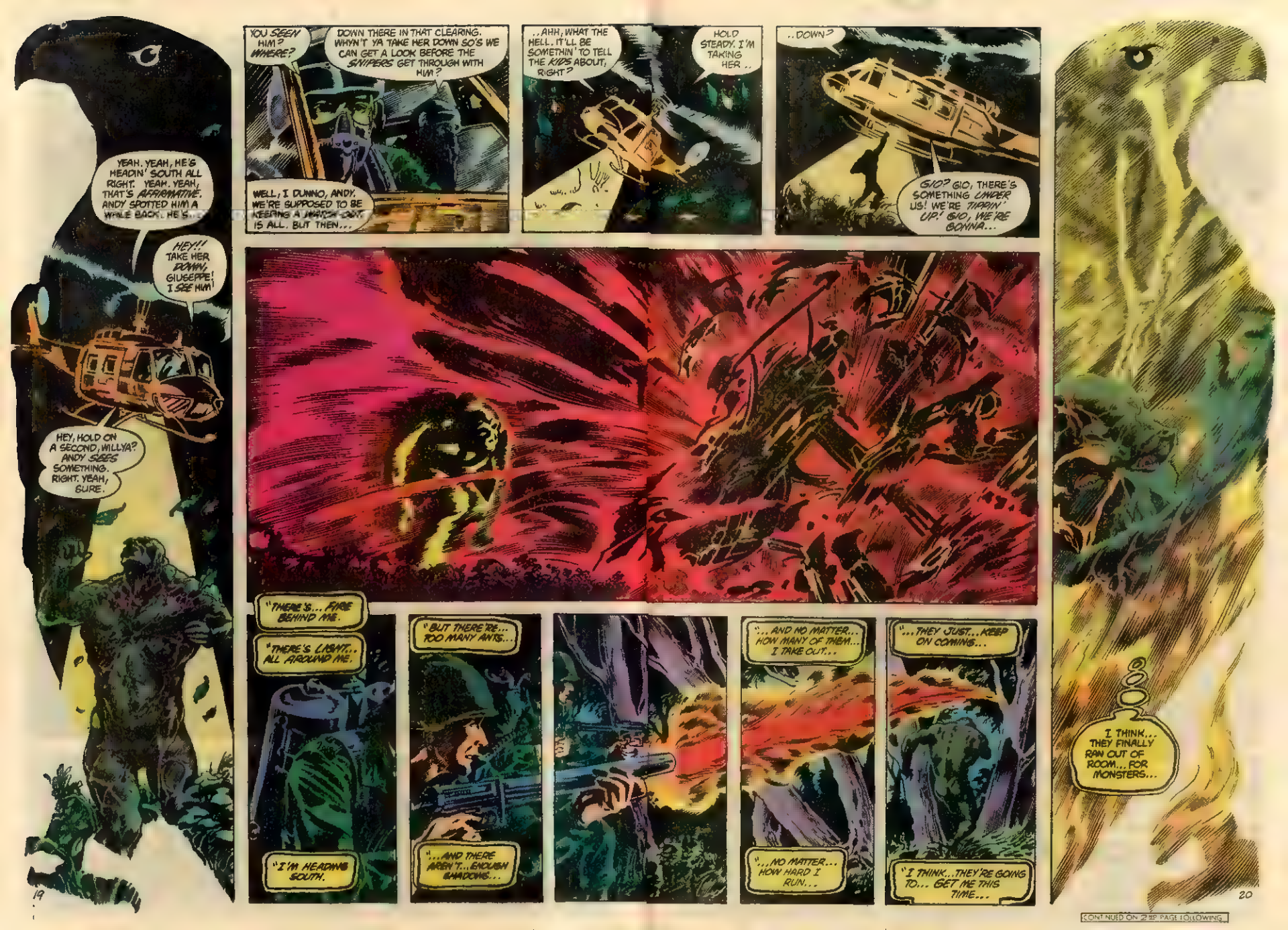
"...AN' I'LL COUNT 'EM."
ZERO MINUS FIFTEEN.
ZERO MINUS TEN.
MINUS FIVE
OKAY...
SWITCH 'EM ON.
HEY, THAT'S NICE. HALO OF LIGHT AROUND THE WHOLE WOODS. THAT'S REAL NICE.
NO PROBLEMS WITH THE FLAMETHROWERS? ANYBODY?
OKAY..NOW, WE'RE COMING AT THE WOODS NICE AND SLOW FROM THE NORTH, GONNA DO US A CLEAN SWEEP EVERYBODY KNOWS THE SCORE, RIGHT? YEAH? WELL, ALL RIGHT...
"LET'S GET SOME!"
LIGHT...WHITE LIGHT... HARD AND SHARP... AND SUDDEN...
BUT WHERE FROM? AND WHY? IT ISN'T YOU... DOING THIS, ARCANE. IT CAN'T BE YOU. YOU'RE DEAD.
I SAW THE BODY.
SO WHO IS IT OUT THERE? MAYBE IT'S NOBODY... MAYBE IT'S JUST... THE MODERN WORLD COMING... TO SLAP A CONDEMNATION ORDER... ON THE SHADOWS...
AREN'T THEY... GOING TO LEAVE ANY DARKNESS...FOR US, ARCANE?
ARE THEY GOING TO... TAKE AWAY EVERYTHING?
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

"EVERYTHING THAT'S...DARK.
...AND PRIVATE...
"...AND SILENT?"
'COPTER?
DUHDUHDUHDUHDUHDUHDUHDUH.
ABBY? THAT YOU?
WHAT'S GOING ON? I THOUGHT I HEARD..
'COPTERS, MATT. LOTS OF COPTERS, OVER THE WOODS BY THE MOTEL...
AND ONE OF THEM'S COMING THIS WAY.
IT LOOKS AS IF IT'S GOING TO...
CG
THAT..
THAT WAS OUR HOUSE.
THAT WAS WHERE WE LIVE!
YEAH.
"NOWHERE IS... SAFE ANY MORE."

NOWHERE.
NOT FOR... ANYBODY.
...NOT IN THE... WORLD OF NATURE.
THIS MORNING I WATCHED A BEETLE... THAT HAD GOTTEN ITSELF IN TROUBLE... WITH SOME ANTS.
FIRST THERE WAS THE BEETLE... THEN THERE WAS JUST... A BEETLE-SHAPED PILE OF ANTS.
THE BEETLE WAS BIGGER... AND STRONGER... AND MORE CLEVER...
HEY!!
BUT I GUESS THERE WERE JUST... TOO MANY ANTS.
THIS WAY! I SEEN HIM! THIS WAY!


YEAH, YEAH, HE'S HEADIN' SOUTH ALL RIGHT. YEAH, YEAH, THAT'S AFFIRMATIVE. ANDY SPOTTED HIM A WHILE BACK. HE'S...
HEY!! TAKE HER DOWN, GIUSEPPE! I SEE HIM!
HEY, HOLD ON A SECOND, WILLYA? ANDY SEES SOMETHING. RIGHT. YEAH, SURE.
YOU SEEN HIM? WHERE?
DOWN THERE IN THAT CLEARING. WHYN'T YA TAKE HER DOWN SO'S WE CAN GET A LOOK BEFORE THE SNIPERS GET THROUGH WITH HIM?
WELL, I DUNNO, ANDY. WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE KEEPING A [illegible] OUT. IS ALL. BUT THEN...
..AHH, WHAT THE HELL. IT'LL BE SOMETHIN' TO TELL THE KIDS ABOUT, RIGHT?
HOLD STEADY. I'M TAKING HER..
..DOWN?
GIO? GIO, THERE'S SOMETHING UNDER US! WE'RE TIPPIN' UP! GIO, WE'RE GONNA...
"THERE'S... FIRE BEHIND ME.
"THERE'S LIGHT... ALL AROUND ME.
"I'M HEADING SOUTH.
"BUT THERE'RE... TOO MANY ANTS...
"...AND THERE AREN'T... ENOUGH SHADOWS...
"...AND NO MATTER... HOW MANY OF THEM... I TAKE OUT...
"...NO MATTER... HOW HARD I RUN...
"...THEY JUST... KEEP ON COMING...
"I THINK... THEY'RE GOING TO... GET ME THIS TIME...
I THINK... THEY FINALLY RAN OUT OF ROOM... FOR MONSTERS...

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

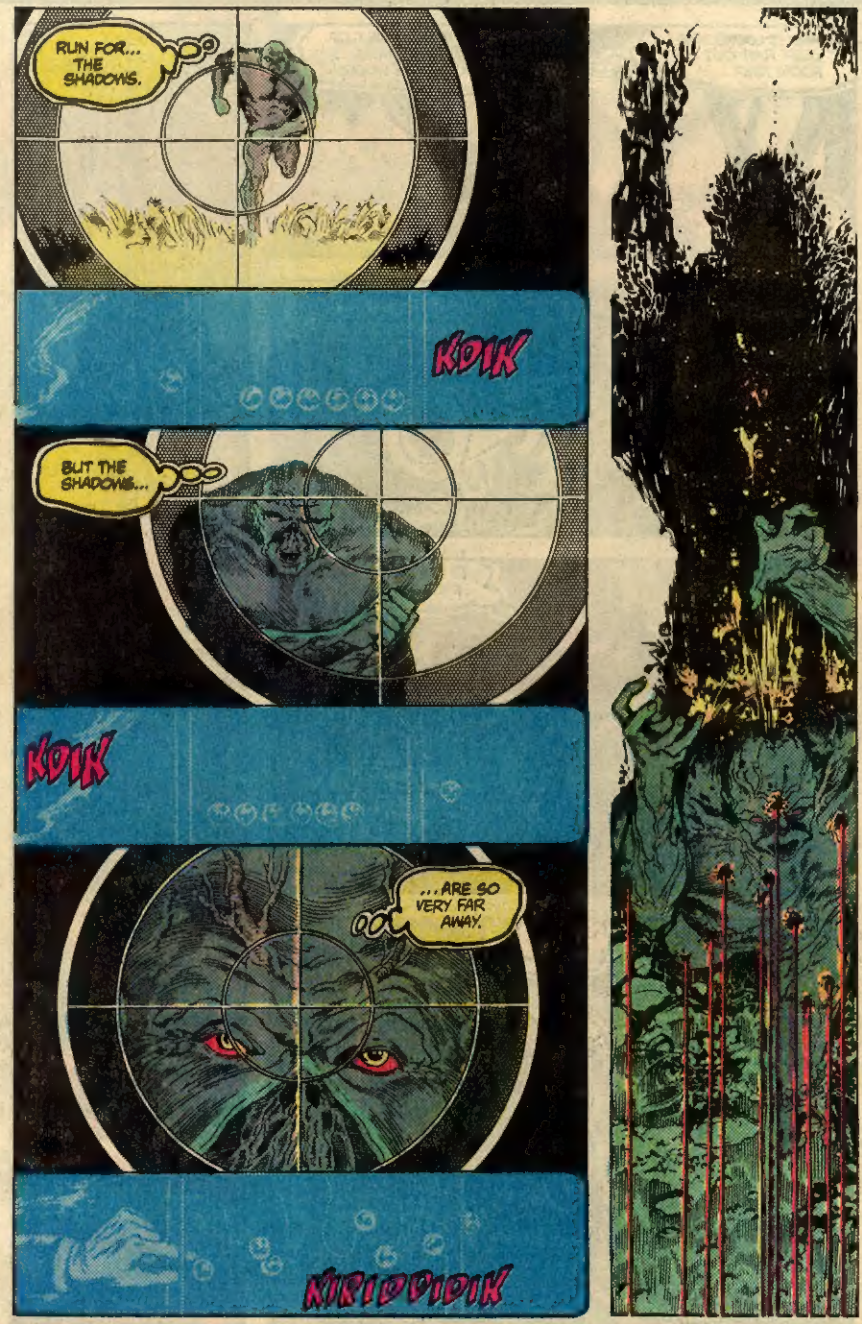
...AND IT LOOKS LIKE... I JUST RAN OUT OF ROOM TOO.
THERE'S A BELT OF BLIND WHITENESS... AROUND THE WOOD...
AND BEYOND THAT...THERE'S SHADOWS.

"I WONDER...WHAT'S IN THE SHADOWS?"

IT DOESN'T MATTER.
I CAN'T STAY HERE.

IF I CAN JUST...MAKE IT THROUGH THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT...I'LL BE OKAY.
I CAN DO IT.
THIS BODY'S...NEAR ENOUGH INVULNERABLE. THEY WON'T...BE ABLE TO STOP ME.

I'D BETTER RUN.


RUN FOR... THE SHADOWS.
KDIK
BUT THE SHADOWS...
KDIK
...ARE SO VERY FAR AWAY.
KRIDDIDIK

IS IT, Y'KNOW, IS IT...
YEAH...
IT'S DEAD.
NEXT:
THE ANATOMY LESSON

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Dear Len and Company,

Last week, I got all thirteen of my SWAMP THING comics and read them straight through. My conclusion?

I like the way Tom Yeates illustrates. Shadows are everywhere. Darkness creeps up his walls. (Or does it drip down like blood?) Yeates' depiction of nature, distorted by night, swirls and moves like a living thing. And Swamp Thing—he shambles, always uncomfortable, even when resting. Agony and sorrow live in his face and eyes. Mr. Yeates is a great atmosphericist (I made that word up). One of comics' best.

And Mr. Pasko (rivaled only by Roy Thomas' ARAK) is the most literate and responsible writer on the comics scene today. The wrap-up in #13 to the Nazi/Beast/KC epic is one of the finest, most intelligent, creative runs ever in comics. Along with fresh plotting, there's meat for thought in his writing.

Thanks, Len, for joining these two "artists" in resurrecting SWAMP THING. Your and Berni Wrightson's original ST may not be replaced, but Messrs. Yeates and Pasko are making us old readers gradually forget.

TIM KARTER

Forget what, Tim? Oh, sorry, this is SWAMP THING; serious book here.

I was glad to read that you'd sat down to read Marty's epic all in one sitting. Personally, I think it's most effective read all at once. I've spoken to comics fans who seem to think the storyline was going on too long—something which perplexes the undersigned. As a long time fan, I remember when the complaint was that stories were far too short. Why the reversal of sentiment, I wonder?

—Joey

Dear Mr. Wein,

As issue #13 showed, the apostasy has been put off for yet another generation. Boy, am I relieved. So where do we go from here? Alec has been cured of his disease and three supporting characters remain. As far as the disease subplot went, I thought it was dragged on too long and too quickly solved. After issue #2 it started to become more of an annoyance than a well-developed subplot. At least now it's over and the future will be a little brighter. As for the supporting cast, I hope they stay around for a while. ST is going to need some help battling the Sunderland Corporation.

I was very pleased with this issue's Phantom Stranger story. "The Man Who Isn't There" will be remembered as one of my favorite PS stories. Perhaps what I like best about PS tales is that they are not really about the Phantom Stranger at all. They are about people. The focus of the painting is simply you and me. The Phantom Stranger is the frame. And from what I understand, PS will frame an extremely interesting group of people next issue.

ADAM BURCHESS
1315 Morreene Rd.,
Durham, NC 27705

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Dear Swamp Folks,

Swampy's latest incarnation has had a year to "find itself" now, and I just want to say that it's found something pretty good, something shared only by NIGHT FORCE among current comics—real suspense. Quite simply, by abandoning the comics norm of good guys in white hats and bad guys in black hats, and its concomitant "good guys must survive and win" plots, Martin Pasko has produced a true "Saga of the Swamp Thing", the climax of which I await eagerly. I fear for Liz and Dennis' lives. I am completely ambivalent about Kripptmann, who is more pathetic than despicable, but still not a sympathetic character. But the absence of absolute heroes and villains makes all of the characters well worth watching. The ambiguities and paradoxes of Pasko's writing are perfectly complemented by Yeates' taut, moody artwork. In its first year, SOST has established itself as one of the finest series being produced.

My only regret is that so fine a book must waste pages on a mediocre back-up. Perhaps the Phantom Stranger is a strong character, with lots of potential. If so, none of it has been displayed here. If full-length Swamp Thing stories aren't available, let's at least have more of Pasko and Giffen's superb Dr. Fate tales. They would certainly fit the overall tone of the book far better than the Stranger's pointless plot twists.

The back-up question aside, it has been a fine first year, folks. My best wishes for ST's continued success.

FRANCIS HERMAN
4231 Middle Reservation Rd.
Perry, NY 14530

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Dear Editor,

Having just seen the SWAMP THING movie on HBO, I was eager to read the next installment of SAGA OF SWAMP THING. I greatly enjoyed the movie, though I wished that it had done better.

SOST #13 was a classic. Congratulations to Martin Pasko for a dynamite four-parter that culminated in this issue's epic story. I didn't see how the Swamp Thing would be able to overcome a mystical menace that would have been even too much for Superman to handle.

Tom Yeates' incredible art greatly enhanced the story. The merits of this book greatly abound and speak for themselves.

Now that Swampy is cured, and the menace of the Antichrist over, (for now), I am eagerly awaiting to see what will occur in the future, and how Sunderland will fit in.

As for the Phantom Stranger story, it was excellent. I was ecstatic to learn that PS and Swampy would team up next issue. At last!!

Thanks for a great story and a great comic book filled with promise for the future.

RICHARD ROTMISTROVSKY
9 Church Rd.,
Suffern, NY 10901

I hope your idea of promise for the future includes full-length stories for Swampy, now that the Stranger has dematerialized from these pages...at least for the time being. More on this after the next letter...

Dear Len,

Swamp Thing #13. You have a solid production, and I enjoy it.

One useful comment for the back-feature: decide something for yourselves about the ultimate nature of the Phantom Stranger or get rid of him. His line on the bottom of page three suggests something he hasn't always lived up to.

Anyhow, your indecision about him makes him a bit of a bore. Though you may argue it's part of his "mystery," I'm too old to assume that he is profound just because I don't understand him.

STEPHEN GAWRONSKI
6412 Arizona Ave.,
Hammond, IN 46323

Len, remind me never to discuss unified field theory with correspondent Gawronski.

Joking aside, while the back-up in general garnered praise, Francis Herman's letter hit the nail on the head: that idea of unfulfilled potential. The character wasn't going to grow very much in the six pages allotted him every month, and we've recently been lucky enough to be able to feature full-length Swamp Thing stories, so the decision to include PS out was in effect made for us.

All for now. Thanks to all of you for writing, and that includes Art Vidro, Roslyn Heights, NY; Jeff Dyer, Peosta, Iowa; David H. Smith, Statesboro, GA; Kent A. Phenis, Indianapolis, IN; David Allen, Olney, IL; and T.M. Maple, somewhere between here and the DEW line...

—Joey